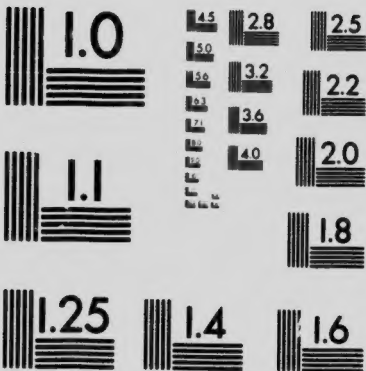




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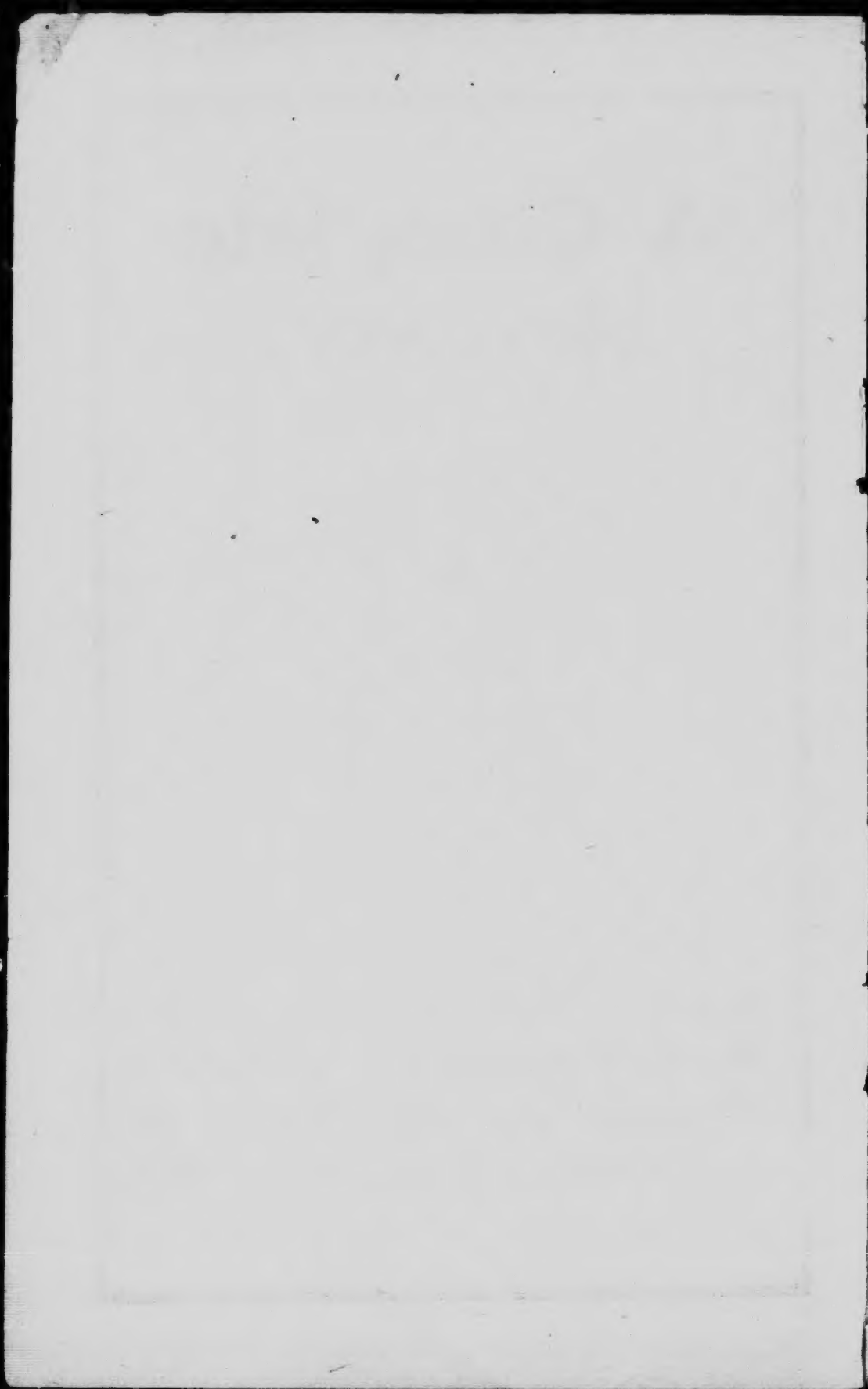
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A Complete Answer.



HON. W. S. FIELDING (FINANCE).

**Speech delivered by Hon.
W. S. FIELDING, Finance
Minister in the House of
Commons, Dec. 3rd, 1907**



A Complete Answer.

Hon. W. S. Fielding, Finance Minister for Canada, is one of the ablest debaters on the continent. His speech delivered in the House of Commons, on December 3rd, 1907, was a most crushing reply to criticisms by the leader of the Opposition and Hon. Geo. E. Foster, and could only be fully appreciated by those who heard it. Mr. Foster had been particularly abusive, but Mr. Fielding's reply was most complete and convincing. He said:—

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster) in his opening remarks yesterday stated that the Right Hon. Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) in his speech had gone into a good deal of new and unexpected matter. I should be glad to return the compliment to my hon. friend (Mr. Foster), but I am afraid I cannot do so. I fear that we must recognize the fact that the speech he gave us yesterday, after all, contained very little that was new. It was a repetition of the old attacks, of the old sound and fury which we have heard so often in this House, attacks which have met their effective answer not only in this House, but from time to time in the verdict rendered upon them throughout the country.

Mr. Foster—Colchester, for instance.

Mr. Fielding—We will have a word about Colchester before we close. I was reminded by the violence of my hon. friend's attack of a little incident in my own early modest political career. In the Provincial Legislature, of which I was then a member, I had introduced a bill which I regarded as of considerable importance, but it was one as to which several of my good friends seemed to entertain doubts. We were able to satisfy most of them that their doubts were not warranted and that the measure was a good one. So the day came that the measure had to

be taken up. We had not a large majority at the time and a member or two more or less had to be carefully considered. There was one young man who was half Scotch and half Dutch; that is a combination which produces a large degree of determination. I might also say of obstinacy; and that good friend remained unconvinced. So we had to proceed with the debate with the possibility of his voting against us. Then an hon. gentleman on the other side rose and commenced an attack, as the hon. gentleman commenced yesterday and with almost equal violence. Before he had spent many minutes, my doubting friend came over to my side and he said, "It's all right, Fielding, that fellow has fixed me." Now, if there was a single doubting, hesitating member in the party which supports my right hon. friend in this House, the speech of the hon. member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster) yesterday would undoubtedly have fixed him in his loyalty and devotion to the chief. That is the effect which I am sure it has had in the House, and I believe it will have outside.

The hon. gentleman, and the leader of the Opposition also, devoted a considerable portion of time to the discussion, sometimes grave and sometimes humorous, of the circumstances under which two new Ministers have been brought into the Cabinet of my right hon. friend. Now one would have thought that this was not a most fruitful subject for discussion at this time. Some years ago an advertisement appeared in a London paper to this effect, that a man who had been very successful in business and was about to retire, offered for a small consideration to communicate to others the secret of his successful career. A small fee was asked, and a great many people applied, and to every one a slip of paper was sent with these words:

"My success is due to the fact that I have always tried to mind my own business and let other people do the same." Now one might think that the selection of Ministers for the Cabinet was particularly the business of my right hon. friend the Prime Minister, and that there was no particular reason why hon. gentlemen opposite should ask more than the usual formal ministerial explanations. But it appears they thought they should go more deeply into the matter, and should inquire into the motive that prompted the selection of this, that and the other man, and that they should pour out their sympathy upon various members of this House who had not been honored with seats in the Cabinet. Well, if my hon. friends opposite had not been restrained from that discussion by the motto of that successful business man, one might think they would be restrained by regard to the somewhat old proverb about certain people who live in glass houses not being the proper persons to throw stones.

Hon. gentlemen opposite have not had to do anything in the way of Cabinet making for some considerable time, and there is small prospect that they will be called upon to engage in that honest enterprise and industry. Still they have had something to do in the way of promotions. It is not so long ago that they had occasion to select a gentleman who, to some extent, corresponds with the man who holds the rank and dignity of a Minister of the Crown; and if it be right for them to inquire carefully into the circumstances under which a Minister is brought into this House, obtain places, we, not to be lacking in generous sympathy, may devote a moment or two to inquiring how it was that the leader of the Opposition came by the place which he now fills. Many hon. gentlemen opposite tell us that there are many men over here who had labored faithfully in the ranks for ten or twelve years and yet they were ignored. Well, are there not many men over there who have labored even longer than that and yet have been ignored by the conservatives. Why, the hon. member for North Toronto asked, did not years of faithful labor count in this case? Did they count in the case of

my hon. friend himself? He has labored long, and I hope I may say, faithfully, in the vineyard; but when the time came, strange to say, though he had been in this House and labored in and out in the cause of his party for many years, he was ignored, and the gentleman who sits beside him became a leader. I follow the methods of the discussion yesterday—was it an insult to the hon. gentleman from North Toronto? Did he not measure up to the standard—again I am quoting the leader of the Opposition—did he not measure up to the proper standard? Was he lacking in ability? Was he lacking in experience? Why was it that they passed over my distinguished friend, and selected a leader of the Opposition a gentleman who came into this parliament many years later?

Mr. Foseer—A conundrum.

Mr. Fielding—It is a conundrum. Then there is my hon. friend from South Lanark (Mr. Haggart) who sits on the left of the member for North Toronto, and who had labored in the vineyard much more than ten or twelve years. My hon. friend was in this House nearly a quarter of a century before the leader of the Opposition came in. He had been a Cabinet Minister; he had been a close associate of Sir John A. Macdonald. Why, sir, I remember more than once, in my early days of public life, before I came into this House, when I tried to see Sir John A. Macdonald on public business, and it seemed to me that my hon. friend from Lanark was always going in to see him, and I could not. He was a close friend of the great leader. He is an experienced public man. Did he not measure up to the standard? Was he insulted by the fact that another gentleman was taken as leader of the Opposition? There is my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk) sitting immediately behind the leader of the Opposition, not many years the senior of the hon. gentleman in political record, but the senior in this respect, that was chosen leader of the Conservative party in the Province of Quebec, and it might reasonably be supposed that when a leader was required for the party generally, the gentleman holding that position in the great Province of Quebec would have been consider-

ed as fairly in the line of promotion. I do not know why my hon. friend was passed by. Would it be because he was leader of the Province of Quebec, and was not acceptable in that respect? I should be slow to think it. There is my genial and quiet and studious friend, the member for Beauharnois (Mr. Bergeron) with a thousand qualifications, the chief of which is his excellent good humor, on which I congratulate him. This hon. gentleman had also been laboring in the vineyard for a long time. He had been seventeen years in this House before the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. R. L. Borden) came here at all. Did he fail to measure up to the proper standard? Did he lack ability? Did he lack integrity? Did he lack qualification? Why is it—observe, sir, that I am merely following the example of yesterday—why is it that he was ignored? One would suppose that his excellent qualities would have commended themselves to the members of the Conservative party when they assembled to select a leader. Was it again because, notwithstanding all these good qualities, he came from the Province of Quebec? Well, we on this side, thank heaven, do not care what Province a man comes from, or to what race or creed he belongs. The Liberal party is big enough to take a man for the man's sake, regardless of his Province, his race or his creed. Then there are others. There is one whom I have not the pleasure of seeing here to-day, but who was formerly very active in public affairs. I allude to the former member for the county of Pictou. Did he fail to measure up to the standard of ability, of integrity, of the other qualifications? Certainly the hon. member for Pictou, Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper, was one of the great fighters of the Conservative party. Why is it then—again I am asking the question as they asked it yesterday—why is it that Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper was passed over in order that the hon. member for Carleton might become the leader of the Conservative party?

Mr. Foster—He is coming.

Mr. Fielding—He is coming? Well, I do not know whether he is coming or not. Whether he is coming as a leader or follower, the first point is

that he shall come at all. I am not in the least depreciating the abilities of that gentleman, but I venture to say that if he is going to come back as the member for Pictou he has got to be a busier man in the matter of politics than he has been in the past few years. Then, there is my hon. friend the whip, the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Taylor.) I find that that hon. gentleman had been twelve years in this House before the hon. member for Carleton, Ontario, was called to come here at all. Nobody will question his fidelity; nobody will question his energy.

Mr. Foster—That is all right; he is the leader.

Mr. Fielding—Just so. Nobody will question his industry, his energy, his fidelity to his party, and how it is that his twelve years of faithful labor in the vineyard were ignored and that this young and comparatively unknown man was taken to be the leader of the rising hosts of the Ontario Tories? There are others. My hon. friend here mentions the name of the hon. member for Grey (Mr. Sproule). That hon. gentleman is not in his seat to-day. I am sorry he is not here. My hon. friend from Gr. was nearly twenty years in this House before the hon. member for Carleton, Ontario, appeared here at all. Why was he ignored? Who will question his intelligence, who will question his knowledge of public affairs, who does not know that he is the head of a great organization which has done much for the Tory party of Ontario? That hon. gentleman had a thousand claims to the position, but it appears that he did not measure up to the standard that was required. Was he insulted? Was it a gross offence to him that this comparatively new man was taken to be the leader of the party? But there are others. There is my hon. friend the member for South York (Mr. Maclean). If there are those who think that that hon. gentleman has not the special capacity for the leadership he certainly is not among the number. That hon. gentleman surely has been a zealous member for his party. He has, in addition to the service he has rendered to the party in this House and on the platform been a most zealous supporter of his party

in the press. How is it that he is not recognized; how is it that he could not measure up to the standard which was necessary in this case? I see that we have with us, and I am glad he is here, the veteran member for Halton (Mr. Henderson) who has put in an appearance for the first time to-day. He has a record in this house of having been a faithful and energetic and honorable man who is worthy of all respect, and I am glad to see him here with us, but I wonder whether it was an insult to him that he should be passed over because he failed to come up to the standard? I see in the corner there my respected old friend from Sunbury and Queens (Mr. Wilmoth). He has been a veteran in the fight; he was here for many years before the hon. member for Carleton, Ontario, and yet he has been ignored. In order that I may be just to the different sections of the Dominion I should mention the name of my hon. friend, the senior member for Queens, Prince Edward Island (Mr. A. Martin) who is an old veteran. Who will question the zeal of my hon. friend at all times whether the tunnel is up or not, and yet he seems to have been ignored and overlooked. It seems to me that for some extraordinary reason all these men—eminent men, able men, faithful men in the party—have failed to measure up to the standard required and they have had to be ignored.

Now, if some hon. gentlemen will say that all this is not fair and generous criticism I will have to agree with him. But I say that it is just as fair, as sensible and as proper as the observations that were made by the hon. member for Carleton, Ontario, and the hon. member for North Toronto as to the manner in which the Prime Minister exercised his right of selecting his own colleagues. The others, said the hon. member for North Toronto, were left to do the muck-raking. To use the same illustration, these gentlemen whom I have named are left to do the muck-raking. This is the manner in which my hon. friends have referred to the hon. members who sit behind

There we had a discussion on the question of surpluses, and in the course of that discussion it appears

that the hon. leader of the Opposition was induced to delve into some ancient history. He has been studying up the files of the Halifax newspapers of a quarter of a century ago and some of a later date. It is in

me respects an interesting subject to study, but I wish to warn my hon. friend that there is dynamite in these files. I desire to warn him that there is danger, and that if in his desire to establish some little inconsistency on the part of the Minister of Finance he should come across a report of a Liberal meeting at which he himself took part he may discover that the inconsistencies are not to be found all on one side of the House. Inconsistency is described by Ralph Waldo Emerson as the bugaboo of little minds. If my hon. friend wishes to come within the classification of the philosopher I need not quarrel with him about it, but I do not think we are much concerned with each other's consistency. We are not so much concerned with that which he or I did or said twenty or thirty years ago as we are concerned with what we say or do and are willing to do in our positions as public men in these early days of the new century.

Mr. R. L. Borden—I think my hon. friend misunderstood me. I was citing it for the good sense it contained.

Mr. Fielding—Yes—well, I was referring to a time when the hon. gentleman had good sense. I seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that my hon. friends of the Opposition have a strong dislike to any mention of surpluses. A surplus, when mentioned by a Liberal, seems to start them up at once to arms. Well, we must make allowance for the hon. gentlemen. They did not have very much to boast of in the way of surpluses in their own day, and it seems that they look with displeasure upon the record of their successors who, by whatever cause it may have been brought about, have been in the happy position of being able to present an excellent financial record to the country. I have here very briefly, because I do not wish to detain the House at any great length, a few summarized statements on the surplus question, and I take two periods of eleven years. This Govern-

ment have been eleven years in power, and I take eleven years of the period of our predecessors, which is a fair comparison. I find that during the eleven years of Conservative Government, prior to their retirement, they had total surpluses amounting to \$9,594,000. But, then, they had deficits of over \$12,339,000, so that they had an average deficit during the whole eleven years of \$249,000. Now, I turn to the record of the last eleven years and I find that we have had, during these eleven years, making allowance for the one deficit which occurred at the beginning of our term, surpluses amounting to nearly \$94,000,000. The total surplus is over \$94,000,000 and after deducting \$519,000 of deficit, we have a net surplus for that period of \$93,626,000, an average of over \$8,500,000 per annum.

The mere mention of these seems always to be unpleasant to hon. gentlemen opposite.

Reference has been made to the use to which surpluses might be put. We are very glad to invite the attention of hon. gentlemen opposite to that also. The surplus in a country like Canada is understood to be the amount by which the revenue exceeds the charges on consolidated fund, which is the ordinary every day expenditure. But there are special expenditures; there are large expenditures on what is called capital account. Now we have taken these surpluses which have been very large and we have applied them to payments for what would otherwise have been an addition to the public debt. I find that for eleven years from 1886 to 1896 there were special expenditures outside of ordinary routine amounting to a little over \$80,000,000 above the ordinary charges. The Conservative Government had to provide for these moneys, and how did they provide for them? They provided for them by charging \$62,000,000 of the \$80,000,000 to the public debt account of the country and left that \$62,000,000 to bear interest for future years. We have had in our eleven years of office larger charges of that character; we have had to provide for capital and special expenditures amounting to \$127,000,000, and of that \$127,000,000 over and above the ordinary ex-

penses of the country, we have provided out of our daily receipts every dollar, except \$5,000,000. When the Conservative Government with \$80,000,000 of capital expenditure had to charge \$62,000,000 to the public debt, and when you find that the present Government with \$127,000,000 capital expenditure have only added \$5,000,000 to the public debt, I think that is a record to which our side may occasionally refer with pride, and we must make some allowance for hon. gentlemen opposite if the comparison is distasteful to them.

We are told that the taxation of the country has been enormously increased. The leader of the Opposition and the member for North Toronto (Mr. Fosten) described the amount of money collected in 1896 and the amount that is collected now, and they drew the inference that there was a tremendous burden resting upon the people. They did not tell the people, however, that whereas the percentage of duty and the total values of goods imported for the year—I have here the figures for 1882 in connection with some reference the hon. gentleman made yesterday to that year.

Mr. R. L. Borden—What do you refer to?

Mr. Fielding—I was about to refer to the percentages of customs duties collected. Let it be sufficient to say that comparing the rate of customs taxation in 1896 and the rate of customs taxation last year there has been a substantial reduction in the rate of taxation.

Mr. R. L. Borden—Is that referring to anything I said?

Mr. Fielding—I think it was the hon. member for North Toronto who spoke about the increased taxation, but I think the leader of the Opposition also spoke about it.

Mr. R. L. Borden—What I said was that on a particular quantity of any article such as a yard of cotton, which I took for illustration, owing to the increase of price the actual taxation paid to-day would be greater than it was years ago.

Mr. Fielding—But if we took the total valuation of goods and the totals paid—

Mr. R. L. Borden—The Minister understands.

Mr. Fielding—Yes, I understand the point. If we take the total imports of goods, either including or excluding coin and bullion, you will find that there is a material reduction in the rate of taxation now as compared with 1896. The hon. gentleman conveyed the wrong impression that there had been an increase of taxation. True, there was some increase of taxation on a few articles of luxury, but upon the great mass of the common things used in the country there was a substantial reduction of the duties; and indeed, that very reduction is one of the crimes laid at our door, because hon. gentlemen opposite used to take the ground that the tariff should be higher. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) took the total amount of taxation and he said that so much was collected in 1896 and so much more was collected last year, and therefore there is a great burden on the country. Well, let us get it down to the case of the individual man. John Jones is a laborer; in 1896 he probably got \$1 a day and the national policy did not make him rich; he was not likely to spend a great deal of money on extravagancies out of that wage, and he paid a very small amount of taxation at that time; he could not afford to buy the goods, and if he could not afford to buy the goods he did not have to pay the taxation. If he was forced to wear one coat when he ought to have two, he only paid the taxes on one coat; if he had to use one barrel of flour where two were necessary for his family, and if flour were an imported article, he would only pay the tax on one barrel of flour in 1896. But times have changed. Now John Jones probably gets \$1.75 a day, or \$1.50 at least, as a laborer; he can afford to wear two coats now; his family can have two barrels of flour, and so the customs returns show that the amount collected is larger. But ask John Jones which of these two years was the better for him and his family; ask him if he wants to go back to 1896 when he paid less taxation because he could only afford the one coat and the one barrel of flour; ask him whether he would not prefer the better days of 1906 when he paid more taxation into the customs and paid it voluntarily and cheerfully be-

cause it was an indication of his greater progress, of his steadier employment, of his higher wages, and of his advanced happiness in every way. Ask him and I think John Jones will answer that he prefers the existing conditions. If the Government has been taxing the people enormously, if the fiscal policy of this country is imposing burdens on the people as the hon. gentleman from Toronto (Mr. Foster) would make out, one would naturally ask: Why does not the Conservative party try to change it. There was a time when they did seem to have a tariff policy of their own; it was vague and indefinite, but at all events there seemed to be a tariff issue between them and the Government. Some years ago these gentlemen opposite were strong in empty and meaningless resolutions in favor of adequate protection. But, by and by, the agitation on the tariff question was crystallized, and this Government after careful effort brought down a revised tariff. That was the moment to hear about adequate protection. Prior to that it was a mere abstract question, but now it has become concrete; the Government laid their tariff policy on the table of the House and hon. gentlemen were invited to criticise it. What happened? These gentlemen opposite abandoned adequate protection and accepted the tariff policy of this Government. Never was there a more complete surrender to the Government in regard to the fiscal policy than that which took place when the last revised tariff was brought down. Hon. gentlemen opposite had no desire to continue the discussion; they were ready to close the debate and go on with other business, and if there was a tariff debate at all it was because some hon. gentlemen on this side thought they would like to avail themselves of the opportunity to speak on the question. But it is not only in Parliament that hon. gentlemen opposite have abandoned the tariff question; it is not only here that they have flung adequate protection to the winds. The leader of the Opposition, in the discharge of his duty—it was very proper that he should do so—recently made a tour of Western Canada. When a party leader goes through the country to

discuss public questions one would naturally expect that as there are greater questions and minor questions, he would give the more important questions priority. But, turn to the Toronto News, to the letters of Mr. C. F. H., who cannot be regarded as a gentleman hostile to the leader of the Opposition, who in fact is known to be in close sympathy with my hon. friend, and who always manages to say a good word for the leader of the Opposition and his policy. In his summing up in the Toronto News of the whole tour of the hon. gentleman in the west, C. F. H.—though I have not the paper at hand, I think I can give the exact words, said—“Two very delicate questions were for the most part skated over”—what were they? “the tariff and the Northwest school question.” Why, sir, if any man in this House, any man on this side of the House at any rate, were asked to state what were the two biggest questions that have engaged the attention of this Parliament since the general election, he would say that they were the tariff and the Northwest school question; and yet the hon. gentleman, in the whole of that tour out west, of which his friends have said so much, confined his talk to all sorts of little questions. He talked of the Robbin’s irrigation business a hundred or a thousand miles away from the scene of operations, but he did not talk of it at Medicine Hat, where the facts were known.

Mr. R. L. Borden—Does the hon. gentleman say that it was not discussed at that meeting?

Mr. Fielding—No, but I said that the hon. gentleman did not discuss it.

Mr. R. L. Borden.—Th? hon. gentleman knows that at some meetings I did not discuss the scandals at all, because that was done and done most effectively by my hon. friend from Beauharnois (Mr. Bergeron).

Mr. Fielding—And to which member of my hon. friend’s distinguished party did he commit the duty of talking of the tariff and the Northwest school question?

Mr. R. L. Borden—I spoke of the tariff on several occasions.

Mr. Fielding—For or against it?

Mr. R. L. Borden—For or against

what? Why, I pointed out that this Government had paid the Conservative administration of the past the most tremendous compliment that ever was paid to any party by denouncing for eighteen years the national policy and then coming into power and adopting it.

Mr. Fielding—My hon. friend forgets that when the tariff policy of this Government was brought down and laid on the table of this House the leader of the Opposition of that day, the old genuine Tory leader, Sir Charles Tupper, did not call it the national policy, but said he could hear the wail coming up from the people in the manufacturing industries of the country to condemn this policy. He predicted ruin and destruction as the result of this policy, which was not the old national policy, but the wicked device of the right hon. gentleman and his colleagues. But, as the years rolled on and that policy was vindicated throughout the country as it has been, a different story was told.

Mr. R. L. Borden—Might I ask my hon. friend a question? Did he or did he not, during the last session of Parliament, when the tariff was under discussion, defend various items in it on the principle of protection?

Mr. Fielding—The principle of protection has been in the tariff ever since I knew what a tariff was.

Mr. R. L. Borden—Is it there now?

Mr. Fielding—It is there now.

Mr. R. L. Borden—Was or was not the principle denounced by the hon. gentleman’s leader, and did his leader not promise absolutely to destroy protection?

Mr. Fielding—He never did in my hearing.

Mr. R. L. Borden—Has the hon. gentleman never seen that statement in any reports of his leader’s speeches?

Mr. Fielding—The policy of the Liberal party in tariff matters was proclaimed at the Liberal convention. That policy was to endeavor to reduce the tariff, but with due regard to existing industries, and that policy has been carried out. While the duties on some few articles of luxuries have been increased, those of the great common necessities which the people consume have been subject to serious reductions. I will not

weary the House with the details now; I brought down a list showing that in hundreds of items the tariff was reduced. It was reduced so much that the leader of the Opposition of that day declared it would ruin the industries of the country.

Mr. Foster—Then you went to work to remodel it?

Mr. Fielding—No, the tariff of today is not materially different from the tariff of 1897.

Mr. Foster—Which tariff?

Mr. Fielding—The hon. gentleman is perhaps thinking of the time when he brought in a second tariff in the same month and when he had not the courage to declare that it was the result of greater study and better knowledge on his part, but said that the changes were all corrections of clerical errors.

Mr. R. L. Borden—How many items did you change?

Mr. Fielding—I do not know. If I got greater light and better information I would change every item in the tariff, and I would not blame it on the clerks either; I would take the responsibility myself. If the hon. gentleman goes back to the time when this tariff was introduced into the House and recalls the tale then told by his leader of that day, he will be ashamed any more to say that this Government has continued the old national policy.

Then my hon. friend had something to say about the French treaty, and I do not think he can be very greatly congratulated upon what he did say. He admitted, after he had made some progress in the discussion, that he did not know anything about it. Well, to an ordinary man it would seem that under such conditions it would have been the part of wisdom not to have said anything about it. But then my hon. friend is not an ordinary man, his mind is not an ordinary one. One who could compound the Halifax platitudes can hardly be described as an ordinary man.

Mr. Foster—Tell us that story you told down in Halifax.

Mr. Fielding—So my hon. friend had to be permitted to blunder along and see what capital he could make out of the French treaty before he had any knowledge of its contents, and looking over at my respected friend the Minister of Agriculture, he

said: The Minister of Agriculture is a great temperance man; look at what he has done; he has reduced the duties on rum, the duties on gin, the duties on alcohol. When I ventured to say that that was a mistake, that there was no such reduction, even then my hon. friend was not content; at all events, he said, you have reduced the duties on champagne. He was not more successful there, for I was obliged to point out to him that the duties on champagne, as they appear in the French treaty, are the reduced duties as they were established by the old French treaty which was negotiated by Sir Charles Tupper, and which was brought down to this House, somewhat hesitatingly, I must say, by my excellent prohibitionist friend, the member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster), who recommended it to the House. Now, the member for North Toronto was more cautious—I will do him the justice to say that. He discussed the general circumstances under which the old treaty was negotiated and the circumstances under which the present treaty has been negotiated, but he refrained, and properly refrained, from saying anything as to the merits of the treaty or its contents. I do not know whether this is a case where one can apply the old quotation as to a certain class of people rushing in where angels fear to tread. Perhaps it would not be proper for me to do so—first, because courtesy would not permit me to call the leader of the Opposition a fool, and truth would not permit me to call the hon. member for North Toronto an angel.

Very much has been said from time to time regarding the Liberal platform. My hon. friends have made merry over it, but let me tell them this—and they cannot deny it—that that we have a platform which has been carried out to a very much greater extent than political platforms are usually carried out. We have no difficulty in showing how the Liberal platform adopted in 1893 has been largely carried out. But apart from that, let me call attention to the fact that we have had to defend our action as to that platform throughout the country as well as in Parliament. We have defended it in two general elections and are quite

ready to defend it in a third. Hon. gentlemen opposite have stated again and again that this Government has paid no attention to the Liberal platform. Well, we have had to render an account to the people on that point. We did render an account when we went before them in 1900. We then appealed to the people, and the popular verdict was that we had carried out our platform and policy to their entire satisfaction. We went again to the people in 1904, and despite the jeers of hon. gentlemen opposite, again the people said they were satisfied with the manner in which this Government had carried out its pledges. And not only were Liberals satisfied, but old-time Conservatives came and joined our ranks. There is one thing which Liberals can say, and that is that they were not afraid of having a platform and did make a platform which met the approval of the mass of the people. We did not hesitate to call together the representatives of Liberal principles in order that we might prepare a platform which would suit the requirements of the country. But how is it with my hon. friends opposite? For some years we have had discussions among them as to how they might get a platform. Again and again we have had it announced that at some future time, the next summer or the next recess, some time in the early future, a great Conservative convention was to be held for the purpose of framing a platform. That convention, however, has never yet been held. My hon. friend the leader of the Opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) was reminded about his failure to call such a convention. Let me read to him an extract from one of the papers, and in order that I may not be charged with partisanship, I shall read from a Conservative paper. Here it is, in striking headlines:

A Conservative convention is demanded by western men.

Mark you, Mr. Speaker, demanded. And demanded for what purpose? To draw up an advanced platform.

Winnipeg, September 18.

Yesterday Mr. R. L. Borden, leader of the Commons Opposition, spent in Winnipeg, and was in conference most of the time with the leaders of the party in Winnipeg and Manitoba.

A petition was presented to him demanding that he call a big Conservative convention to draw up a progressive and advanced platform.

They already had the Halifax platform, which had been published and scattered to the wide world. But that was not good enough. It was not liberal enough, broad enough and advanced enough. So these Conservatives met the hon. gentleman, and they met him—if not with a shotgun, with something very much like it. They wanted him, not to dictate the platform, but to get the party to make one. It was pointed out to my hon. friend that only by holding a big convention could proper enthusiasm be aroused and a platform, agreeable to both east and west, be formulated. But there was no platform, and I suppose that is the reason why there was not much enthusiasm.

The petition stated in plain terms that if the request were not granted the support of the party in Winnipeg and Manitoba, and likely in Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, would be withdrawn.

Mr. Lalor—Is that the Eye Opener?

Mr. Fielding—No, it is the Ottawa Evening Journal, edited by a gentleman who, jointly with the correspondent of the Toronto News, may be described as the two closest political friends and apologists in journalism of my hon. friend the leader of the Opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden). At all events we have this condition of affairs. The Liberals had sufficient faith in their leader and their principles and their ability to agree on questions of principle, to assemble together from ocean to ocean, in the city of Ottawa, under the shadow of Parliament, and lay down the policy which they thought the country would adopt. And whatever hon. gentlemen opposite may say regarding that policy, this will stand to the credit of the Liberal party, that, according to the true principles of Liberalism they did not allow two or three men to get together in a dark chamber and devise something, and say that is to be the policy of our party. No, they gathered together the representatives of the mass of the people, the representatives of the democracy of Canada,

and they made the platform which has been their guide from that day to this.

My hon. friend made some reference calls for a passing notice. He said that he had just been out west, and had discovered that the postal service there, and he believed generally, was in a very inefficient condition. Well, if the service which is rendered to-day be inefficient, in heaven's name what must have been the condition in 1896? There is no department of the Government which has done more to improve the facilities and convenience of the Canadian people. I do not say that it has done all it should. In the speech from the throne, we have the declaration that the surpluses which have been accumulating in that department, should and will be applied in securing more liberal accommodation for the people. But let us not omit to take notice of the tremendous progress which has been made. In 1893 or 1894, the hon. member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster) will remember in one of his budget speeches he said that some portion of the Canadian people were clamouring for a two-cent instead of a three-cent rate, but that the country could not afford it. And so long as the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) remained in power the country did not afford it. What was the condition of the Post-office Department at the close of the last year of Conservative administration? There was a deficit of about \$650,000 on that year's operations, and there were accumulations of deficits of former years to the amount somewhat in excess of \$650,000; and a vote had to be taken to clean up the old account and pay off the old deficits. But in 1896 these hon. gentlemen, who are supposed to possess in such an extraordinary degree the instinct of Government, had to give place to other men—we are too modest to say better men. What then happened? I have already told you that there was an accumulated deficit in 1896 besides a deficit for the year. But what has been the result since? In 1907, instead of a deficit of \$600,000 in the year and a three-cent rate, we have a two-cent rate in all Canada, we have reduced postage to the old country, we have reductions all around, and yet, at

the close of the last year, the Post-office Department shows a surplus on the year of \$1,440,000. That in itself is something to be proud of.

But that is not the whole record. Turn now to the question of accommodation. The hon. gentleman tells us that the accommodation provided for the people of the Postoffice Department is entirely insufficient. Well, if it is insufficient, we will take good care that a more liberal policy is adopted in the future. But what are the facts? In 1896 there were 9,103 postoffices in Canada; in 1907 there were 11,377 postoffices in Canada. In 1896 the number of postal notes and money order offices was 1,310, and in 1907 the number was 9,091. In 1896 the postoffice savings banks numbered 755, and last year the number was 1,043. I will not detain the House with further figures, though I could give similar comparisons with regard to the miles of travel, the number of letters carried, the number of articles carried and so on. But I think the figures I have given are enough for the purpose. If the hon. gentleman finds that the postoffice accommodation for the people is insufficient to-day, what must have been the condition of the country in 1896 in the light of the figures I have given?

My hon. friend the leader of the Opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) has had something to say on the question of the provincial subsidies. In his speech at the Russell Theatre the other night he said that I had had the audacity to speak of his action in British Columbia touching the subsidy of that Province as an attempt to bribe the Province. I said that, and I regret that I am obliged to adhere to the opinion I then expressed. There is no doubt in the world that the attitude of the hon. gentleman on that question was a most unfortunate, a most unhappy one, calculated to breed trouble amongst the several Provinces of Canada. Let us glance at the history of these Provincial subsidies. Twenty years ago an agitation began amongst the Provinces for an increase of their allowances. The men engaged in Dominion affairs can easily imagine that it is not necessary to have a greater Provincial revenue, but the men who had been en-

gaged in the Provincial Legislatures—and there are many of them here—know how restricted those Legislatures have been in their operations because of the lack of finances. I do not wish to discuss the merits of our system of Provincial subsidies. It is enough to say that all the Provinces of the Dominion complained that the share which they received from the public treasury was insufficient to enable them to carry on their business and that they appealed to the Dominion Government for a readjustment. When the Conservative Government was in power they declined to listen to that appeal. Years rolled on, and even after the Liberal party came into power, there were difficulties in the way of meeting the wishes expressed by the Provinces. But, after a time, this Government said to the Provincial Premiers: If you are able to agree among yourselves as to the distribution of this money, perhaps we can meet your views. Now that was a very reasonable proposition. This subsidy question has been one of the most delicate with which public men have had to deal since the establishment of Confederation. I remember very well that when what are called "better terms" were granted in 1869, to Nova Scotia, there was a very strong feeling of hostility in Ontario. Ontario was too big a Province to feel the small amount which was given to Nova Scotia, but it was strongly disposed to claim that the granting of the sum was a breach of faith—that these subsidies were in the nature of a treaty and should not be disturbed except by common consent of the Provinces. And, as years went on, and some grant was given—for good reasons or without good reasons—to one or other of the Provinces, there was a feeling of jealousy, or rivalry, and no Province has manifested that so strongly as the Province of Ontario. Not that Ontario would care—as I have said—about the small sum involved, for Ontario is a great rich Province, too big to think of that; but the men in Ontario took it as a matter of principle, that these subsidies were a treaty between the various Provinces and should not be disturbed except by common consent. So, when we come to deal with this

matter with the Provincial Government, we said: We do not want to make difficulties, to cause jealousy, faction and rivalry. But if your Provincial Governments will come together and reach something like a unanimous agreement as to the distribution of this money, we will take the matter up and see what we can do for you. And to that end a Provincial convention was held in this city about a year ago. As a result of that conference, a scale of payments was adopted for the several Provinces. Now, I turn to the attitude of my hon. friend the leader of the Opposition in British Columbia. He goes to British Columbia and tries to disturb the arrangement made at that conference amongst the Provincial Premiers of the Dominion. I complain of the hon. gentleman in this, not only that what he did was a disturbance in itself, but that he conveyed the impression to the people of British Columbia that this was a quarrel between the British Columbia Government and the Liberal party. He tried to lead the people of British Columbia to believe that they were being oppressed by the Government of my right hon. friend (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) and that when the hon. gentleman himself (Mr. R. L. Borden) and his friends came into power, they would grant relief from this thing that the Liberals were doing. That is the chief offence that I lay at his door. He knows he was not fair, he was not candid in so speaking. Who composed this convention? Who agreed to this scheme of distribution? Foremost among them was the Prime Minister of the Conservative Province of Ontario. All the Governments of the Dominion are not in harmony with the Dominion Government of to-day; and I suppose that it is not at all likely that all the Provincial Governments will be in harmony with the Dominion Government at any time. We had at this conference in Ottawa, Mr. Whitney, the Premier of Ontario; Mr. Foy, Attorney-General; Mr. Matheson, Treasurer. We had Mr. Robin, Premier, and Mr. Colin Campbell, Attorney-General, representing the great Conservative Province of Manitoba. We had also, representing the other Provinces, their Premiers and

Ministers, whose names are well known. Mr. McBride was here to represent British Columbia, and he is the head of a Conservative Government. He came forward with an apparent determination that nothing you could do for him would satisfy him. It is evident that he had not come to get an arrangement for British Columbia; he had come there to find a grievance. He did not want to agree to anything that the conference would agree upon. He said: I want a royal commission to look into the case of British Columbia. Now, there was no reason why we should grant a royal commission to one Province and not to another. This was a matter, as I have said, which had been agitated for twenty years. The Provinces needed the money. The time was ripe, not for commissions and further inquiry, but for action. If it was right that Mr. McBride should be given a commission for British Columbia, why should not Mr. Whitney say: I am not satisfied with this arrangement, and I want a royal commission to investigate for Ontario. And so with the Premier of Quebec, the Premier of Nova Scotia and the rest. To grant a commission meant a disturbance of the arrangement. My right hon. friend (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) said yesterday that no commission was better qualified to deal with that question than were the men at that conference. They were men who had a general knowledge of the affairs of the Dominion. They were not prompted by an ungenerous spirit towards British Columbia. I can speak of that with the most perfect certainty. I have said elsewhere, and I repeat it now, that I went to some of the members of the conference before it assembled and asked them to consider British Columbia's claims as favorably as possible, to strain a point in her favor, and treat her generously. And I am glad to say that they were disposed to do that, and that a proposition was made to treat British Columbia generously. I do not want to pander to any particular section of the Dominion. British Columbia is a big, rich Province. Her people are not a party of children, and I do not believe they need a Baby Act for their protection. They came into

Confederation of their own free will, and if they were asked to live up to their bargain they would have no right to complain. But when the whole condition was known, and the other Provinces were disposed to treat them generously and liberally, the Premier of British Columbia should have responded and accepted the consideration with which he was treated. He wanted a commission, and the matter was considered. The conference considered it; Mr. Whitney considered it. Again I say, the leader of the Opposition has done his best to make the people of British Columbia believe that this was a quarrel between Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Province of British Columbia. It was not. My right hon. friend the Prime Minister took no part in that transaction that was not heartily supported by the Hon. J. P. Whitney and all the other Conservatives present at that conference. And that conference, not a Liberal conference, but made up in the manner I have described, having heard Mr. McBride's argument, having heard what he could say, passed this resolution:

"That in the opinion of this conference it is inadvisable that a claim in the way of subsidies of any Province be referred to arbitration."

Why should the claim of one Province be referred to arbitration? Why should we give arbitration to British Columbia when the Province of New Brunswick might think it could present even stronger claims.

Mr. R. L. Borden—New Brunswick did have an arbitration; so did Nova Scotia.

Mr. Fielding—Not as respects subsidies.

Mr. R. L. Borden—In respect of claims.

Mr. Fielding—I am talking of subsidies.

Mr. R. L. Borden—I am talking of the entire subject.

Mr. Fielding—The hon. gentleman has no right to interpose other questions in connection with subsidies.

Mr. R. L. Borden—May I ask what is the difference in principle?

Mr. Fielding—This is the difference in principle. If the Province of Nova Scotia had a claim, it was a claim for property, and was a proper subject for arbitration. A claim

for property of any Province in the Dominion may be claim for arbitration.

Mr. R. L. Borden—It was not a claim for property, it was a claim for money.

Mr. Fielding—It was a claim for property which the Dominion of Canada had taken over and insufficiently paid for.

Mr. R. L. Borden—Was it not a money claim?

Mr. Fielding—It was a money claim for property. But the claim of Mr. McBride was a money claim, not for property. Does my hon. friend see the difference?

Mr. R. L. Borden—No, I do not.

Mr. Fielding—Then I am sorry for it. I think if the Dominion of Canada had a property transaction with any individual, that individual might claim the right to go to a court or an arbitration and see whether he could get justice, and if the arbitration or court awarded him \$100,000, no Province in the Dominion, as a Province, would feel it had thereby any grievance. But if there was a treaty as to subsidies between the Provinces, and then some scheme was devised whereby one Province would get something and the other Province would get nothing, that is quite a different transaction.

Mr. R. L. Borden—If it depended on a treaty, how could you alter that treaty without the consent of British Columbia?

Mr. Fielding—I say you could not insist upon a large number of Provinces coming to an absolute agreement, you could not expect it. We took nothing away from British Columbia.

Mr. R. L. Borden—The hon. gentleman does not understand my question. If the hon. gentleman puts the case as that of a treaty, how can you alter that treaty without the consent of British Columbia?

Mr. Fielding—The hon. gentleman is proposing to do it absolutely without the consent of the other Provinces. I say the attitude of the Dominion Government in the matter was absolutely fair. We said to these Provinces: Now, there may not be absolute harmony among you, although we wish there could be. But whatever you agree upon, try to be unanimous. If you can agree as to

what is fair and reasonable we will take the responsibility of asking for the legislation.

Mr. R. L. Borden—Did the Province of British Columbia, through its Prime Minister, agree that the question as to its right to arbitration should be determined by the Prime Ministers of the other Provinces?

Mr. Fielding—There was no question as to the right of British Columbia to arbitration. How can the hon. gentleman say there was any question of right? He may give anybody a privilege if he likes, but there was never any question of the right of British Columbia to arbitration.

Mr. R. L. Borden—I understood the Minister to say that the question was left to the members of the conference composed of the Prime Ministers and their colleagues from all the Provinces; that question was left to them to determine, and they decided adversely to the Province of British Columbia. Now, what I do not know, and what I am desirous of ascertaining is, whether the Province of British Columbia, through its Prime Minister, consented that that question should be left to the adjudication of these gentlemen, and to be bound by their determination?

Mr. Fielding—No, it did not.

Mr. R. L. Borden—I thought not.

Mr. Fielding—I have not said anything to the contrary. The position the Government took was this: This is a delicate question as between the Provinces. We remembered past differences, as to which I have already called the attention of the House. Now, we said, we are not going to get into a quarrel with you on this matter; but if you can come to something like an understanding—we would like it to be unanimous—then we will take the responsibility of asking Parliament to vote this large amount of money. We found in the end that the hon. gentleman who represented British Columbia apparently was not satisfied with anything except the appointment of a commission. Now I understand that there is no more right why that gentleman should ask for a commission than that the Premier of Ontario should ask for a commission. They had equal rights. They both came

into the union voluntarily; and therefore I say that the hon. gentleman's idea that British Columbia had a right to get a commission is absolutely without foundation. This question had been dragging along for twenty years. The Provinces represented to us that they needed the money, and there was almost an unanimous agreement. When Mr. McBride demanded a commission for British Columbia, if we had granted him that commission we would have been obliged in fairness to grant it to any other Province in the Dominion who asked for it.

Mr. R. L. Borden—Did any other Province ask for it?

Mr. Fielding—No, the other Provinces said: We do not want commissions, we do not want delay, we have been delaying for twenty years, we want action, we want the money. That is what the other Provinces said, not what we said.

Mr. R. L. Borden—Have they got it yet?

Mr. Fielding—Yes, and they are delighted. The gladdest Province of all is the Province of Ontario, I am quite sure. I had a very polite acknowledgment from my friend, the Premier of Ontario, who said he was very glad to receive the money; no doubt they all were. It was no longer a time for delays for inquiries, the time had arrived for action. Mr. McBride's proposition was in effect to sling the whole matter to the winds and leave it where it had been for ten, fifteen or twenty years. And the Government said, Mr. Whitney said, Mr. Foy said, Mr. Matheson said, Mr. Roblin said, Mr. Colin Campbell said, and all the others said: We will have no more delay, we will not consent to a commission taking up this matter, we will accept this scheme, we will waive these objections — and Mr. Whitney filed something like a protest to them — we will waive these objections, we want the thing settled. And that settlement which was made, not between my right hon. friend and British Columbia, that settlement which was made as much by Mr. Whitney and the other Conservative gentlemen as it was by me—that is the settlement that the hon. gentleman is trying to set aside. I say that the action of that hon. gentleman

was a breach of faith with Ontario, a breach of faith with Quebec, a breach of faith with New Brunswick, a breach of faith with Prince Edward Island, a breach of faith with Manitoba, a breach of faith with Saskatchewan, a breach of faith with Alberta.

Mr. R. L. Borden—Are you forgetting Nova Scotia?

Mr. Fielding—I say the attitude of that gentleman was a breach of faith with all these Provinces, and that as a public man he should have been willing to act in the interests of harmony instead of stirring up difficulty.

Mr. R. L. Borden—Might I ask the hon. gentleman a question? There was some reference made by me yesterday with regard to the Imperial Act, and I understand I was under some misapprehension, from an observation made by the Prime Minister and by the Minister of Finance. Would the Minister of Finance be good enough to explain whether any change was made in that Act in its actual drafting, and what the change was? I may have been misled by inaccurate newspaper reports.

Mr. Fielding—If I remember right, the hon. gentleman thought that the expression "final settlement," had been put in the Act and then stricken out. That was incorrect. That was never in the Act. It is in the address adopted by this House. Of course, no Act of Parliament can be final or unalterable, least of all an Act of the Imperial Parliament which is the paramount Parliament.

Mr. R. L. Borden—It is the same as other Parliaments in that respect, I should say.

Mr. Fielding—Yes, within its proper functions, but this act contains as a schedule the address of this House. The Act does not say in the enacting clause that it is final and unalterable, but the schedule which is attached and which is a declaration of what this Parliament wished and declared and upon which the Act was founded—is exactly as it was sent from this House and it does include the expression final and unalterable. The difference between the bill as first introduced and the bill as it was finally passed is that in the original bill, owing to a circumstance which I am not called upon

to enter into at this moment, the schedule was not included, but when the bill was finally disposed of the schedule was put in in order that there should be attached to the Act the declaration which this Parliament made that, at all events, as far as we were concerned, the settlement was final and unalterable.

Mr. R. L. Borden—I gathered from what was reported to have been said in the British House of Commons that the bill as proposed by this Government to the Imperial Government did contain in the body of it the phrase final and unalterable.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier—Not at all.

Mr. Fielding—No, as a matter of fact we did not propose any bill. We sent over the address of the Parliament of Canada and it was left to the proper officials of the colonial office and the parliamentary draughtsman to prepare the legislation. We did not prepare any bill.

Mr. R. L. Borden—Did not the Under Secretary of State for the colonies make some allusion to some change in that regard?

Mr. Fielding—I do not quite catch the purport of my hon. friend's question.

Mr. R. L. Borden—I think that the Under Secretary of State for the colonies, Mr. Winston Churchill, when he introduced the bill or at the second reading made some allusion to that change.

Mr. Fielding—No, we never proposed any bill; we simply sent over the address which contained the words final and unalterable. In the original bill the schedule was not attached, but the bill was amended in the end by the House of Lords by attaching the schedule; so that, while the words final and unalterable are not to be found in the enacting clause they are to be found in the schedule which is attached and which says that in so far as the Parliament of Canada is concerned it was designed to be final and unalterable.

In consequence of some references which my right hon. friend the Prime Minister made to this question yesterday the hon. member for North Toronto attacked him for what he called a compact with Mercier. The hon. member for North Toronto said that my right hon. friend had made a compact with the late Hon. Mr.

Mercier to this effect, that if the Province of Quebec would give my right hon. friend a majority he would see that the Province of Quebec got an increased subsidy. That is the statement the hon. gentleman made yesterday. Now, he has given us no evidence of any such compact, and I am bound to say that while I do not wish to discredit the hon. gentleman too much I would like to have some evidence of a compact because I have never seen it. I can assure the hon. gentleman that he is laboring under a delusion. As in the case of the hon. gentleman who sits beside him in dealing with the French treaty the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) had not taken the trouble to get the facts, because if he had he would not have said that my right hon. friend had made a compact with Mercier. Anybody hearing the hon. member for North Toronto yesterday would assume that the question under consideration was that of an allowance to the Province of Quebec; that it was a question between my right hon. friend and the Province of Quebec. I want to tell my hon. friend that there never was such a question as that referred to by my hon. friend of granting a subsidy to the Province of Quebec. The subject referred to was a proposal to grant subsidies to all the Provinces of the Dominion. Therefore, that which he has described as a compact with Mercier in Quebec was as much a compact with Ontario and with the other Provinces of the Dominion. But my hon. friend unfairly described it as a compact with Mercier for the special benefit of the Province of Quebec. I think he spoke without a knowledge of the facts, and if he looks into it he will see that I am correct in saying that there was no compact with Mercier, and that any transaction, any communication, any discussion in that regard between my right hon. friend and the late Hon. Mr. Mercier had reference not to something for Quebec only, but to an equitable distribution among all the Provinces in the Dominion.

Mr. R. L. Borden—Then there was a compact.

Mr. Fielding—My hon. friend says so. I have asked him to produce the evidence. I do not know that there

was.

Mr. R. L. Borden—I thought the hon. gentleman said there was.

Mr. Fielding—I do not know what my hon. friend may call a compact. I remember seeing it stated that my right hon. friend the Prime Minister said that he approved of the resolutions which were adopted by the Quebec conference. If that makes a compact, then it was a compact with Mercier, with Mowat, with Fielding and with all the Provincial Premiers of that day. If my hon. friend had said that the crime of my right hon. friend was that he was willing to add to the subsidies of all the Provinces I would have no complaint to make. But his statement was that this was a compact with Mercier for the special benefit of the Province of Quebec.

Now, I have been occupying the time of the House too long, I am afraid.

Some hon. members—Go on.

Mr. Fielding—My hon. friend the leader of the Opposition had something to say about the Quebec bridge and he said it had always been a marvel to everybody that this Government had made this arrangement with a company to build the Quebec bridge. A marvel to everybody! Nobody could understand it! It was not a marvel to the hon. gentleman on October 22, 1903, when the record of this Parliament shows that on that day the project to which he refers was brought into this House and when the hon. gentleman allowed it to pass without a single word of complaint. It passed unanimously. It became an expression of the whole Parliament of Canada and not of this Government only. Then the hon. gentleman went down to Quebec and at a public banquet that was given to him there he took credit to himself for co-operating with this Government in bringing about the construction of the Quebec bridge. Well, the bridge, of course, has gone down and we can all be wise after the event. My hon. friend has discovered that he marvelled much, but the record shows that he did not marvel when the Act passed. I want to warn my hon. friend against this weakness that he has of allowing things to pass without opposition—very often supporting them—going

out and taking credit for them, and then, when something unexpected happens, turning around and condemning the Government for the thing he supported. I think my hon. friend should guard against that.

There was one important question that the hon. gentleman discussed towards the close of his speech, and I must say that he did so in rather more temperate terms than usual. It was the question of corruption at elections. I want to say that when that hon. gentleman, or any other hon. gentleman in this House, claims that there should be some improvement in our election laws in order that we may avoid such things as have happened too often, as has been shown in the disclosures of our election trials, I am most heartily with him, and if my hon. friend had taken that ground, if he had recognized the situation frankly—if he had come to this parliament and gone to his supporters and said there had been looseness in this respect, men on both sides have committed faults, there has been a lack of careful reflection, many men have gone into elections in a way they should not have done, both sides have been guilty and we should unite in making the conditions better—that would have been a position which we could all commend. But, has he pursued that course? Has he not gone through the length and breadth of the land and endeavored to convey the impression that the Liberal party was the party of corruption and the Conservative party the party of purity? That is the inference to be drawn from the attitude of the hon. gentleman. It was not a fair inference, it was not generous, it was not accurate. We need not fear comparison with the Conservative party in the matter of election trials. Unfortunately, too many men have allowed their zeal to outrun their judgement and have committed acts in connection with elections which do them no credit and which we should all regret. Did all these things occur on the Liberal side? If the records be examined it will be found that of the men who have been unseated in this parliament of Canada from Confederation down, the number stand about half Liberals and half Conservatives. One

party or the other, I forget which, had two or three more than the other party, perhaps it was the Liberals. But, compare that statement with the inferences to be drawn from the hon. gentleman's speeches and from the attitude of the Conservative press. If time permitted I could give the record of all the men who have been unseated in the Tory party, but let me take a few of the more eminent. Sir John Abbott, a Prime Minister, was unseated, Sir Hector Langevin was unseated, Sir Charles Tupper was unseated, Sir John Macdonald was unseated twice and in the case of the Kingston election the judges reported there was gross corruption throughout the whole election. If time permitted I might give a longer list, but all I desire to call attention to is that this inference that the corruption has been all on the Liberal side and that there has been none on the Conservative side is not fair, and is not calculated to advance the interests of reform. I think my hon. friend from South Lanark (Mr. Haggart) was unseated—

Mr. Haggart.—No.

Mr. Fielding.—Then I take it back. But I can tell him that the gentleman who sits on his right (Mr. Foster) was unseated in the Province of New Brunswick.

Mr. Taylor.—Another prominent man unseated was the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Fielding.—Yes, but he got back with three times the majority he had before.

Mr. Taylor.—He used three times as much money.

Mr. Fielding.—I am going to have a word to say about that when we make comparisons. There is this to be said: that the Minister of Finance went into the fight; he challenged his opponents to do their best; he went through it to the end and the record of the case is before the country, and the judges recorded it as their opinion that not a single act of corruption, direct or indirect applying to the Minister of Finance was proven. But I must not forget my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster). Who would have thought as you heard him denounce corruption last night, that he ever

could have been unseated. It is a good many years ago I admit—

Mr. Foster.—That was a very pure election.

Mr. Fielding.—Was it?

Mr. Foster.—Yes.

Mr. Fielding.—Well we will see about that. The statement made by my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) obliges me to say something that I perhaps would not have said otherwise, for I do not like going into these old things. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) was elected and the usual proceedings of an election trail took place. One witness testified as to a certain prominent gentleman who for convenience I shall call John Doe, but who my hon. friend knows by another name. Mr. John Doe's name was mentioned in the proceedings; a witness testified that he met John Doe on the train and that he suggested to John Doe that it would be a nice thing to have a little money in a certain parish, and John Doe asked the witness if he would handle it for him, and a day or two afterwards John Doe gave the witness \$80 for that little parish and afterwards he gave him another \$20. But the witness did not tell more than that; the court adjourned and the following morning we had a fine illustration of Davy Crockett and the coon. You know the old story is that Davy was such a good shot that the moment he pointed the gun the coon said, "Don't shoot, I'll come down." And so the morning after the mention of John Doe's name the solicitors for the member (Mr. Foster) came to court and said: For Heaven's sake don't go any further, we will throw up the sponge.

Mr. Foster.—Does my hon. friend vouch for the literal accuracy of his words?

Mr. Fielding.—In all things except as to the name of John Doe. My hon. friend does not wish me to give the real name of John Doe because he knows him as well as I do. But the Minister of Finance acted differently. When it was shown that some man in over zeal had paid a fellow \$4 or \$5 for his vote, the Minister of Finance did not say, "For God's sake stop the trial." The Minister of Finance said, go right on if there is anything wrong about this elec-

tion let us see what it is, let us know all about it. The member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster) who says he is not afraid of the judgment of the people seemed to be so much afraid of the judgment of that court that he would not go on with the trial.

Mr. Lalor.—I suppose the Minister of Finance answered all questions that were asked him?

Mr. Fielding.—I did not hear the hon. gentleman. My hon. friend (Mr. Lalor) adds so much to the wisdom of the house generally that I would like to know what he is saying.

Mr. Lalor.—In his examination did the Minister of Finance answered all questions asked him?

Mr. Fielding.—I answered every question in relation to my election certainly. I answered every question which the judges said was a proper question.

Mr. Lalor.—And you added that your counsel would not permit you to answer others.

Mr. Fielding.—I say I answered every question which the judges ruled was a proper question. Is that right? But I want to say a word more about John Doe. Now, what became of John Doe?

Mr. Foster.—That is the question.

Mr. Fielding.—That is the question. Any one who heard the hon. member (Mr. Foster) denounce corruption yesterday; any one who saw him point at my right hon. friend and declare that he kept corruptionists in the service and put corruptionists in the service, would expect that John Doe must have been consigned to the penitentiary in the days when my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) was in power. But John Doe did not go to the penitentiary. John Doe was appointed by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) to one of the most lucrative offices in the Province of New Brunswick. Now, I do not refer to these things by way of recrimination. I say that every man who knows anything of the public life of the country knows that some men, and good men too, men who in the ordinary relations of life are good men, have allowed their zeal in politics to overthrow their judgment and they have done foolish and improper and corrupt things. And if we will fairly recognize the fact on

both sides that such is the situation and without trying to put the responsibility on others endeavoring to bring about a better state of things, a better election law and purer elections, we will deserve and receive the commendation of the people. But, Sir, those who approach that question in a spirit of hypocrisy, those who pretend that it is all purity on the Conservative side and corruption on the Liberal side, they will not receive the commendation of the people of Canada.

A word or two about Colchester. I do not object to my hon. friends opposite having a measure of joy over their capture of the seat. As the game of politics is played they are entitled to that. But they had better not rejoice too much. Is it not something like the Dutch taking Holland? With one or two exceptions Colchester has been Conservative for thirty years. This is the record: In 1874 Colchester was Conservative, was Conservative by 116. In 1878 Colchester was Conservative by 376, in 1882 Colchester was Conservative by 435, in 1887 Colchester was Conservative by 627, in 1891 Colchester was Conservative by 803, in 1896 Colchester was Conservative by 177, and in 1897 the Liberals squeezed in with a majority of 6, and in 1904 the late member was elected by a majority of 191. There is no county in Nova Scotia that I regarded as more doubtful than Colchester. It has been historically a Conservative county; it was a miracle that we carried the whole eighteen counties in Nova Scotia in 1904; it might be too much to expect that it could be done again. I am not surprised or disturbed by the result in Colchester; I knew it was a very risky county and we were prepared to take the risk. My hon. friend spoke of changes in the public opinion of the country. When I was in Colchester I did not see so much indication of change, except that I found some people who were complaining about economies on the Intercolonial Railway.

Some hon. member.—Oh!

Mr. Fielding.—Yes, I found that the efforts in the direction of economy which were so vigorously employed by my hon. friend (Mr. Emerson) and which are being follow-

ed by his successor, seemed to get nerves of a good many people there, and that was the only indication of displeasure that I found. I had intimations that if certain things could be done, that if we would not insist upon so much economy and efficiency, perhaps a section of the people would feel more kindly towards us. However, we could not agree to that, and in the exercise of their rights voted against us. I found no manifestation of change in public opinion in Colchester other than that. So I do not think our hon. friends need imagine that they have a great deal to hope for in Nova Scotia. If my hon. friend cares to look into the political situation in Nova Scotia, say for the last three years and a few months, he will find this interesting fact, that the people of Nova Scotia have been called upon to elect either to parliament or the legislature within that period sixty-two members and that they have elected one who calls himself an Independent Liberal, six who were willing to call themselves Conservatives, and fifty-five Liberals. If my hon. friend has no better hope of that political change which he thinks is going to take place in the country than is to be found in Nova Scotia, then he deserves our sincere look for it throughout the Dominion at large. We have had since the general election thirty-eight bye-elections in Canada, and of these twenty-nine have been carried by gentlemen who call themselves Liberals. There are one or two who may not see eye to eye with us; but of the whole number elected, I think I am correct in saying that there

are only six or seven who are willing to call themselves Conservatives. In these figures I see very little indication of the coming change which our hon. friends opposite are so fond of talking about. Why should we regard seriously these boast of theirs? Have we not heard our hon. friends proclaim in the past that they were going to sweep the country? I believe, Sir, that the people of this country can be trusted to deal fairly between this Government and the Opposition—a party which at one time was a constructive party, and which with all its faults did much for the building up of Canada, but which seems to have become a party of obstructionists. They obstructed the Grand Trunk Pacific for months, and are now tumbling over each other to say that they never opposed it at all; they obstructed the British preference for many years, and now wish to claim a share in it; they obstructed the tariff policy of this Government for many years, and now find it to be so good that they hardly venture to assail it in Parliament, and when they go to the west they skate over it as they do the Northwest school question. The intelligent people of this country will weave into the hon. gentleman's Halifax platform the record of the Conservative administrations supported by the hon. gentlemen who sit with him, and will compare that with the record of eleven years of good Liberal Government during which Canada has enjoyed as never before the blessings of peace, progress and prosperity.